

## **POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR GILL NETS**

The department needs to update regulations to allow the use of monofilament gill nets in the existing gill net fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries in response to legislation passed during the 2019 legislative session.

Senate Bill 7, codified in the 2019 Laws of Maryland at Chapter 80, allows the department to adopt regulations to authorize the use of a monofilament gill net to catch fish. Currently, gill nets in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries are required to be made out of material other than monofilament (multifilament or nylon are typical materials). Monofilament gill nets have been allowed in Maryland's portion of the Atlantic Ocean, coastal bays and their tributaries since the late 1970s, and are widely used in other jurisdictions, including Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. Because other states and most researchers have moved to monofilament material for gill nets, multifilament and nylon nets have a very low demand and have become increasingly difficult to obtain for use in the Chesapeake Bay.

In the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries, current rules for gill nets require that gill nets be attended drift nets, meaning that the fisherman using the net is near to the net, and that the net drifts with the current (i.e. is not anchored to the ground). Due to these attendance and drift requirements, the department does not have conservation concerns with the introduction of monofilament material to the suite of options available to fishermen to use in this fishery. After consulting with the Striped Bass Industry Advisory Group and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission Gear Workgroup, the department would like to allow the use of monofilament gill nets under the same restrictions currently in place for gill nets made of other materials such as nylon or multifilament fibers.

Additional Information: [2019 Laws of Maryland, Chapter 80](#)